THE NAME OF THE BAJA CALIFORNIA CAPE WORMSNAKE

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Abstract.— The type-specimen of *Glauconia boettgeri* Werner, 1899, is consubspecific with *L. h. slevini* Klauber, 1931. The valid name of the Baja California Cape wormsnake accordingly is *Leptatyphlops humilis boettgeri* (Werner).

The allocation of a snake described 75 years ago (Werner, 1899:-116) as *Glauconia boettgeri* has long been uncertain, largely because of its unknown type locality. The original description is reasonably good, and the species was stated to be related to *Leptotyphlops humilis;* but no subsequent reviewer has placed it definitively with any known species. Werner (1917:198) later reviewed the whole family but added nothing except the speculation that *boettgeri* might be grouped with certain African species. He had earlier placed it as a synonym of the African *Leptotyphlops labialis*, but that species differs in numerous ways (e.g., no preocular supralabial, rostral extending posterior to eye level), as he noted in 1917. He concluded that *L. boettgeri* might be related to *L. latifrons* and *L. scutifrons*, both African species, but is distinct from them. Indeed it is distinct, since *L. scutifrons* has no preocular labial and *L. latifrons* has a very large rostral. His final thoughts, seemingly, placed *L. boettgeri* with African species rather than with *L. humilis*, his first impression; and perhaps for this reason Klauber (1940) made no attempt to allocate *L. boettgeri*, although he cited Werner's 1917 monograph.

In an attempt to fix the allocation of Werner's name, Dr. Josef Eiselt of the Vienna Museum very kindly loaned us the holotype of Werner's species for more careful examination. Although too faded to reveal the pattern of pigmentation, in other respects the specimen, now No. 15455 in the herpetological collection of the Natural History Museum of Vienna, is a typical representative of the population now known as *Leptotyphlops humilis slevini* Klauber (1931:338). It has 254 dorsals; 17 subcaudals; 12 scale rows around tail, 14 around body; and median scales on head all about equally wide and little, if any, narrower than the scales in the median row on the neck and trunk. The body length is 203 mm, the tail 10.8 mm. The body-length/diameter ratio is 58, the body-length/tail-length ratio 18.4. For *L. humilis slevini*, Klauber (1940) records 253 as the mean (range 244-269) for the dorsals; 15 (range 12-18) for the subcaudals; scalerow counts and median head scales as in *L. boettgeri;* body-length/diameter ratio mean 49; body-length/tail-length ratio mean 23.

These characters clearly place Werner's *G. boettgeri* with *L. humilis slevini*. The latter is the only *L. humilis* subspecies with

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equal-sized median head scales, and only one other (*L. humilis dugesi*) has as few as 254 dorsals (and its maximum is 257). Only one other (*L. humilis cahuilae*) has only five pigmented dorsal scalerows, but unfortunately this character cannot be determined; however, the general tone ("light brown") is matched. Direct comparisons of the holotype with all available specimens of *L. humilis* (unfortunately none of *L. humilis slevini*) reveal a complete agreement in all external features of scutellation, except for the median head scales being equally broad and as large as the median scales of the trunk. This feature Klauber emphasized, however, as distinctive of *L. humilis slevini*. There is a minor deviation of the holotype from the mean body proportions of *L. humilis slevini*, but the range of variation in these features is considerable. Klauber did not record the variation for *L. humilis slevini* but noted (1940:99) that in a homogeneous series of 52 *L. humilis humilis* the range of body-length/diameter ratios varied from "under 45" (1) to "over 70" (1) and that in 54 of the same subspecies from the same area the body-length/tail-length ratios varied from "under 16" (1) to "over 24" (3). Thus the ratios of the holotype of *G. boettgeri* respectively of 58 and 18.4 presumably fall well within the expected range for *L. humilis slevini* about the means respectively of 49 and 23. Indeed, the slightly shrunken holotype of *G. boettgeri* was originally measured at 214 mm in body length, tail 11 mm, diameter 3 mm. The latter measurement apparently was an error, for even now the diameter differs in various parts of the body, between extremes of 3 and 4 mm, with 3.5 mm being an approximate mean. In a less dehydrated condition 4 mm would be likely. The length of the body has clearly diminished in the interim. The body-length/diameter ratio of 75 given by Werner (1899:116) is, however, clearly too high; the most reasonable figure (based upon Werner's 214 mm body length and our 4 mm estimate for diameter in the fresh specimen) is 54, quite in line with that of *L. humilis slevini*.

The name *Leptotyphlops boettgeri* has not been used frequently, and therefore the possibility arises of appealing to the International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature for conservation of *L. humilis slevini*, 33 years a junior of *G. boettgeri*. However, the name *L. humilis slevini* itself has not been in use for 50 years; nor is it a widely cited name. The case does not justify an appeal, even under the terms of the 1972 decisions of the ICZN (Corliss, 1972:1120).

Accordingly, it is necessary to accept as valid the name *Leptotyphlops humilis boettgeri* (Werner, 1899) in replacement of *L. humilis slevini* Klauber (Klauber, 1931) as a subjective senior synonym of the latter name.

The Cape region of Baja California was visited by boat so frequently before 1900 that it is not at all strange that a specimen of *Leptotyphlops* from there should have reached a European museum before 1899. The most frequently visited port was La Paz, whence records for *L. humilis boettgeri* are already available. We accordingly here propose that the type locality of *G. boettgeri* be restricted to La Paz, Baja California, Mexico.

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